

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAN JO 03045 092307Z

63

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 EB-11 CIEP-03 TRSE-00 STR-08 OMB-01

CEA-02 COME-00 FRB-03 XMB-07 OPIC-12 LAB-06 SIL-01

AGR-20 TAR-02 EA-11 EUR-25 DRC-01 /229 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7786

UNCLAS SAN JOSE 3045

E.O. 11652: N/A

TGS: PFORZE VNT, CS

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ODUBER REVIEWS FIRST THREE MONTHS IN OFFICE
WITH PRESS

BEGIN SUMMARY:

1. IN A WIDE-RANGING PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 8, PRESIDENT DANIEL ODUBER TOUCHED ON A VARIETY OF SUBJECTS, INCLUDING PRESIDENT NIXON'S RESIGNATION, THE STATE OF THE COSTA RICAN ECONOMY, THE BANANA NEGOTIATIONS, AND COSTA RICAN FOREIGN POLICY. END SUMMARY.

2. BEFORE OPENING THE FLOOR TO QUESTIONS, PRESIDENT ODUBER BRIEFLY REVIEWED ASPECTS OF HIS FIRST THREE MONTHS IN THE PRESIDENCY. HE NOTED THAT THE GOVERNING STYLES OF EX-PRESIDENT FIGUERES AND HIS OWN WERE DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT AND THAT HIS LOW-KEY STYLE WAS MORE APPROPRIATE AT THIS TIME FOR THE COUNTRY'S TRANQUILITY. HE SPOKE HIGHLY OF PRESIDENT FORD AS HAVING BEEN A DEFENDER OF THE ALLIANCE OF PROGRESS AND AS A PRESIDENT WHO WOULD RETAIN THE DIRECTIONS OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY THAT
UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 SAN JO 03045 092307Z

NIXON AND KISSINGER BEGAN. PRESIDENT ODUBER SAID,

"I KNOW GERALD FORD AND CONSIDER HIM TO BE A CAPABLE MAN...I BELIEVE THAT LATIN AMERICA CAN EXPECT MUCH FROM FORD."

3. ODUBER MADE A PITCH FOR RAPID ASSEMBLY APPROVAL OF THREE BILLS CURRENTLY UNDER CONSIDERATION AND WHICH HE SAID HE REGARDED AS ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESSFUL BY CARRYING FORWARD OF HIS GOVERNMENT PROGRAM. THE THREE ARE: (A) THE CONSUMER LAW; (B) THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE LAW; AND (3) APPROVAL OF THE JAPANESE LOAN FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PORT OF CALDERA.

(THE JAPANESE LOAN BILL WILL BE INTRODUCED BY THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH INTO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY'S EXTRAORDINARY SESSION AT THE END OF THIS MONTH.)

4. PRESIDENT ODUBER SHARPLY CRITICIZED UNNAMED PERSONS WHO HE SAID HAD SPREAD RUMORS THAT THE COLON WOULD BE DEVALUED AND THEREFORE PRODUCE A RUN ON GOVERNMENT SECURITIES. THE PRESIDENT GUARANTEED THAT THE COUNTRY DOES NOT NEED A NEW DEVALUATION AND THAT "DURING MY GOVERNMENT, THE EXCHANGE RATE WILL BE MAINTAINED AT COLONES 8.60."

5. WITH REGARD TO STANDARD FRUIT NEGOTIATIONS, ODUBER WAS ASKED IF THIS NEGOTIATION WOULD NOT PREJUDICE POTENTIAL FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN COSTA RICA. ODUBER SAID HE DOUBTED THAT IT WOULD, MAINLY BECAUSE THE SALE OFFER HAD COME FROM THE COMPANY IN THE FIRST PLACE, AND THAT IN THE U.S. AND OTHER FOREIGN COUNTRIES THIS IS NOT CONSIDERED TO BE AN EXPROPRIATION BUT A "SIMPLE, COMMERCIAL NEGOTIATION." HE ADDED THAT COSTA RICA IS SOLIDLY WITH PANAMA IN ITS CONFRONTATION WITH UNITED FRUIT, BUT SAID THAT THE PANAMANIAN HAVE THEIR WAY OF DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM AND COSTA RICANS HAVE THEIR.

6. PRESIDENT ODUBER ANNOUNCED DURING THIS PRESS CONFERENCE THAT HE IS INSTALLING DR. LUIS BURSTIN IN CHARGE OF A NEW INFORMATION OFFICE WHICH, HE

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 SAN JO 03045 092307Z

SUGGESTED, WOULD FACILITATE HIS RECEPTION OF INFORMATION FROM THE GRASS ROOTS ABOUT THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS.

7 ODUBER APPROVED FOREIGN MINISTER FACIO'S HANDLING OF COSTA RICAN FOREIGN POLICY, ESPECIALLY THE LEADERSHIP ROLE FOR WHICH FACIO WAS SELECTED AT THE LOS CONFERENCE IN CARACAS. THERE WERE NO QUESTIONS ABOUT CUBA AND ODUBER DID NOT BRING IT UP.

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